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ABSTRACT

A survey of the State University of New York's admissions personnel and residence hall directors was conducted during Spring, 1976. Examined were personality traits and self-concepts of travelers and non-travelers. Those characteristics which would aid in the hiring process were identified. Also examined were sex-role and occupational stereotyping in men and women who traveled in their admissions jobs. Demographic and biographic questions plus a self-rating personality scale were analyzed using Chi-square analysis at the .05 significance level. Of 289 surveys mailed, 150 were returned and usable. Significant traits identified were Social Poise and Popularity. Significant differences were found between the men and women travelers, where the women rated themselves higher in Autonomy and Individuality. This finding supports research demonstrating that women who consciously choose professions dominated by men perceive themselves as autonomous individuals. The question which this survey and analysis did not answer is why certain women choose male-dominated occupations and where they have acquired their self-esteem. (Author)

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OCCUPATIONAL SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING AND SELF-CONCEPTS OF ADMISSIONS PERSONNEL

JoAnn Mayo

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"OCCUPATIONAL SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING AND SELF-CONCEPTS OF ADMISSIONS PERSONNEL"

JoAnn Mayo

With the recent and continuing struggle for equality through federal legislation, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1972, and the general enlightenment of equal treatment for men and women through the attempts at passage of the federal Equal Rights Amendment, the innate abilities and learned behaviors of both sexes have been continual topics for study by psychologists, educators, sociologists and others. Individual differences, discrimination by sex and equal treatment of both sexes have become concerns in all areas of our society.

This paper examines not the students who are admitted to institutions of higher education, but the admissions officers who do the admitting: their numbers, sex, and personality traits. A system of higher education, the State University of New York, was chosen as the population due to its homogeneous nature: it is publicly controlled, almost all admissions personnel have Masters' degrees and generally the same socio-economic backgrounds.

Admissions personnel in the State University of New York (SUNY), as a part of their job description, have the responsibility of travel for purposes of freshman and transfer student recruitment. Even as late as 1974, the sex of the majority of admissions personnel was male: in 1974-75, 64% of admissions personnel was male; in 1975-76, it dropped to 60%. With the majority of admissions officers male, it could be said that, within SUNY, admissions is an entry-level job primarily dominated by men. An assumption drawn from this observation is that since travel is an important part of the job, men would most probably have the "stuff" it takes to travel. Travel, as used in this paper, involves such aspects as: working far enough away from the home base, usually requiring consecutive overnight stays in less familiar geographic

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areas; being on one's own; meeting new people briefly and superficially; coordinating flight and car rental schedules; and driving long distances.

The existence of sex-role stereotyping and its subsequent carry-over into the individual's self-concept and occupational choices is well-documented (Broverman, et.al., 1972, Broverman, et.al., 1968; Suchner & More, 1975; Schein, 1973, Tangri, 1972). Men are perceived by others and see themselves as more agressive, competitive, self-confident, independent, worldly, adventurous and ambitious as well as unemotional, blunt, insensitive and rough. Women, on the other hand, are perceived by others and see themselves as the opposite: less independent, less adventurous, less ambitious and more sensitive, more emotional, etc., (Broverman, et.al., 1972). Because there are many more positive characteristics attributed to men than to women, these traits are thought to be more socially valued and men's self-concepts tend to be more positive than women's self-concepts, who because of a lesser number of positive personality traits, have lower self-concepts (Broverman, et.al., 1968).

If the demands of travel require such characteristics as independence, adventure, worldliness, which it very well may, then it follows that men would generally be considered for admissions jobs over women, since men stereotypically exhibit these characteristics. Perhaps this can explain the existence of more men in admissions in the SUNY system than women, because sex role stereotyping plays an important part in the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring practices of admissions personnel. It then follows that this sex-role stereotyping carries over into occupational stereotyping (Schein. 1973; Suchner & More, 1975) and increases the psychological barriers to women and impedes their entry into male-dominated occupations. One could say that, quoting Robert K. Merton "occupations can be described as 'sex-typed' when a large majority of those in them are of one sex and when there is an associated normative expectation that this is how it should be" (Schein, 1973).

Since there are more men than women in admissions within the SUNY system so that this profession could be labeled "male-dominated" and sex-typed, a systematic study was designed to examine the personality traits and self-concepts of the SUNY men and

women admissions personnel. These self-concepts were compared to the self-concepts of SUNY colleagues, residence hall directors, whose jobs are characterized by two very different qualities from admissions: not only do not residence hall directors travel, as defined above, but the nature and demands of their job require them to be on a campus continuously for the academic year. Secondly, neither the number of men nor women residence hall directors dominated their profession to the extent that admissions did and hence, it is not sex-typed, but "neutral".

There are two primary purposes for examining the personality traits and self-concepts of admissions personnel and residence hall directors. The first is that desirable personality traits can be recognized and identified by introspective and prospective candidates (through the process of self-selection) and by employers seeking qualified admissions personnel and residence hall directors, regardless of sex. If job candidates and employers are aware that admissions jobs require, for example, dominant or autonomous or flexible people and that residence hall directors require more understanding and emotional maturity, than this knowledge could be used within the interviewing and hiring process. Therefore it was hypothesized that there would be significant personality differences between the travelers (admissions) and the non-travelers (residence hall directors).

The second purpose concerns itself with the more encompassing and pervasive issue of sex-role and occupational stereotyping, concentrating on those men and women who consciously choose jobs considered sex-typed and "male-dominated". What kinds of personality traits and self-concepts do these men and women have as compared to each other and to men and women in higher education? Much research has dealt with distinguishable personality traits of men and women and occupational stereotyping, but little research has concerned itself with sex differences, personality traits and self-concepts and travel. Those few that have been done dealt with professionals working overseas and the depression syndrome (King, 75), the effects of traveling on later decision-making (Toinsh, 73) and risk-taking attitudes of aviation specialists (Roberts & Wilke, 72).

Based on the past research dealing with sex differences, it was hypothesized that women admissions counselors would still perceive themselves along traditional sex lines and display traditional feminine traits, and that the men would perceive themselves along traditional male sex roles. Therefore, Hypothesis #2 stated that there would be significant personality differences between men and women travelers (admissions).

METHOD

SAMPLE

The sample was selected from a population of the State University of New York's admissions and residence hall personnel. The major source for admission personnel names and addresses was the Annual Counselors Directory, 1975, published by SUNY. Since SUNY does not have a complete compilation of residence hall directors, all Housing Directors were contacted and requested to release the names and addresses of their professional housing staffs. Twenty out of twenty-seven housing lists were submitted in time for selection of the sample.

Seventy-five individuals from the three groups of male residence hall directors, female residence hall directors and male admissions personnel were randomly selected. Since at the time of this survey only sixty-four female admissions personnel were identified as being employed by SUNY, all were included in the sample. The total number surveyed was 289, and all were sent a questionnaire which included personal background and demographic questions and a self-rating personality scale.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND SELF-RATING SCALE

A questionnaire was constructed which included personal background and demographic questions on number of weeks traveled, satisfaction with travel, general job satisfaction, age, marital status, number of children, ages of children, number of years in current job, number of professional jobs, salary and contract appointment. For purposes of this study, travel is defined as "three or more consecutive overnight assignments per week/per year". Daily commuting trips and yearly conventions were excluded. As mentioned above, travel is meant to involve aspects such as: working far enough

away from the home base, requiring overnight stays in less familiar geographic areas; being on one's own, meeting new people briefly and superficially; coordinating flight and car rental schedules and/or driving long distances.

The second part of the survey instrument was a Self-Rating personality scale developed by J.J. Brownfain (1952) and revised by J.G. Martire (1955). The scale consisted of 26 items representing personality traits which serve as a measure of the self-concept. When a person is asked to judge him/her self on particular personality traits, he/she is thought of as evaluating his/her self-concept, which is a part of the entire personality. Table 1 reproduces this self-rating scale, and for all 26 personality traits, respondents were asked to rate themselves according to "How I See My Actual Self" on a scale of 5 to 1, "5" being very high and "1" being very low.

PROCEDURE

Personally addressed envelopes which included a cover letter briefly explaining the study, personal background and demographic questions and the self-rating personality scale were mailed to 289 people, with a self-addressed stamped return envelope. All were assured of the anonymity of the questionnaire.

RETURN RATE

Of the 289 surveys mailed, 154 (53.3%) were returned by the requested deadline. 150 returns were usable for the two hypotheses to be tested. A breakdown of the 4 groups' return rate was:

	# Returned	% Response Rate
Male Residence Hall Directors	41/75	54.7%
Female Residence Hall Directors	45/75	60.0%
Male Admissions Personnel	32/75	42.7%
Female Admissions Personnel	32/64	50.0%

Of the four non-usable responses, one was neither in residence nor admissions, and 3 were negative responses ("dumbest thing", "not anonymous", and "didn't understand").

Of the 150 usable respondents, the following frequencies were:

73 males	63 admissions
77 females	87 residence hall directors

Also, it became apparent that some admissions personnel did not travel (as defined) and some residence hall people listed conference attendance. A new variable, "New Travel" was introduced to identify the traveling admissions people (47 total: 22 males and 25 females) and the non-traveling residence hall directors (77 total: 35 males and 42 females).

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Computer Program, a Chi-square analysis was used to test whether or not there were statistically significant differences between: 1) travelers and non-travelers with respect to the 26 personality traits; and 2) male and female travelers with respect to the same 26 personality traits. A level of .05 was chosen for establishing significance for the exact probability of any computed chi-square statistic. If a chi-square analysis of each personality trait resulted in a significance level less than .05 it would be inferred that the two groups in question differ significantly with respect to that particular personality trait.

RESULTS

For Hypotheses #1, significant personality differences are observable between admissions travelers (N=47) and non-traveling residence hall directors (N=77), two of the 26 personality traits, Social Poise and Popularity were found to be statistically significant, with travelers rating themselves higher on Social Poise and non-travelers rating themselves higher on Popularity.

SOCIAL POISE

	2	3	4	very high 5	total
Travelers (admissions)	0	12 25.5%	22 46.8%	13 27.7%	47 37.9%
Non-travelers (residence hall directors)	1 1.3%	23 29.9%	46 59.7%	7 9.1%	77 62.1%

Chi-square=7.93407 df*=3 Significance=.0474

POPULARITY

	2	3	4	very high 5	total
Travelers (admissions)	0	18 38.3%	28 59.6%	1 2.1%	47 37.9%
Non-travelers (residence hall directors)	1 1.3%	18 23.4%	46 59.7%	12 15.6%	77 62.1%

Chi-square=7.88982 df*=3 Significance=.0483

For Hypothesis #2, significant personality differences are observable between male (N=22) and female (N=25) admissions travelers, two of the 26 personality traits Individuality and Autonomy, were found to be statistically significant, with women travelers rating themselves higher on both traits.

INDIVIDUALITY

	3	4	very high 5	total
male travelers	7 31.8%	5 22.7%	10 45.5%	22 46.8%
female travelers	2 8.0%	13 52.0%	10 40.0%	25 53.2%

Chi-square=6.16697 df*=2 Significance=.0458

AUTONOMY

	2	3	4	very high 5	total
male travelers	1 4.5%	5 22.7%	14 63.6%	2 9.1%	22 46.8%
female travelers	0	5 20.0%	8 32.0%	12 48.0%	25 53.2%

Chi-square=9.62695 df*=3 Significance=.0220

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* Although the Self-Rating Scale options ranged from "1-very low" to "5-very high", if there were no responses at the "very low" end by both groups, the SPSS program deleted the empty cells from the analysis and adjusted the degrees of freedom (df) accordingly.

DISCUSSION

HYPOTHESIS #1:

In comparing the 26 personality traits with travelers (N=47) and non-travelers (N=78), significant differences were found to exist in two traits, Social Poise and Popularity.

For Item #3, Social Poise, it appears that more of the travelers (27.7%) rated themselves at the highest level as compared to the non-travelers (9.1%). Based on this analysis, one can not determine if a higher self-concept with regard to social poise caused certain people (men and women) to choose jobs that included travel or whether the travel demands of the job nurtured social poise.

For Item #20, Popularity, it appears that more of the non-travelers (15.6%) rated themselves at the highest level than travelers (2.1%). A possible explanation for this apparent tendency could be the nature of the residence hall job: residence hall directors are surrounded daily by people that know them and probably enjoy their company rather consistently. Positive reinforcement and feelings of "belonging" prevail within the comfort and security of a campus residence hall. Contrast this setting with that of an admissions officer who might travel from one to eighteen weeks, staying overnight in different areas of the state, perhaps meeting few familiar faces and whose contact with other people is brief and probably superficial.

The original hypothesis hoped to identify distinct personality traits identifiable in travelers and non-travelers. Of the 26 personality traits, only two were statistically significant. Therefore, Hypothesis #1 must generally be rejected.

HYPOTHESIS #2:

In comparing the 26 personality traits with male (N=22) and female (N=25) travelers, significant differences were found to exist on two items, Individuality and Autonomy with women rating themselves higher on both. On Item #13, Individuality, women rated themselves as "4" and "5" totaling 92% as compared to men, 68.2%.

Again, there is no way in this initial study to ascertain what factors might have influenced the 22 female respondents to rate themselves higher in individuality.

Did they consciously choose jobs in admissions because of their individuality or did admissions work and the travel demands foster individuality and uniqueness of character within them? To what extent does the feminist movement have an effect on these respondents self-ratings? Was their reference group all men, all women, and/or men and women in admissions? This study can not identify to whom these women were comparing themselves, but my speculation is that they were contrasting themselves with other women.

For Item #24, Autonomy, 48% of the women rated themselves at the highest level as compared with only 9.1% of the men. For both items, Individuality and Autonomy, it is a surprising and unexpected finding to observe the tendency for women to rate themselves higher than the men since almost all of the literature, except for very recent studies, (Tangri, 1972 and Frieze, 1974) have demonstrated repeatedly that women are perceived and perceive themselves along traditional feminine stereotypical lines. Of course the same question can be raised: did these women travelers already possess these traits of individuality and autonomy prior to a job committment which included travel or did the travel foster these traits? What was their reference group? What determining factors in their personal and family life might have nurtured these self-concepts? Whatever the causes or reasons, it appears that some women, women who have chosen admissions jobs traditionally occupied by men, perceive themselves as possessing personality traits traditionally attributed to and valued in men.

In any event, Hypothesis #2, significant personality differences are observable between male and female travelers, is not supported by the data for two reasons: 1) not only was there a tendency for men and women travelers to rate themselves equally on at least 24 personality traits, 2) on the two traits, Individuality and Autonomy, where significant differences were observable, it was the women who rated themselves higher. Therefore, although Hypothesis #2 must also be generally rejected, the unexpected findings support the most recent research studies dealing with women who are choosing occupations traditionally dominated by men.

After analyzing the personality traits and self-concepts of travelers and non-

travelers, and male and female travelers, a comparison of the 26 personality traits of all the men and women in the sample was made. A chi-square analysis at the .05 level of significance was computed on all 26 personality traits, comparing all the men in the sample (N=73) with all the women (N=77). Of the 26 personality traits analyzed at the .05 level of significance, two were statistically significant, Interest in Opposite Sex (.0010) with the men rating themselves higher, and Dependability (.0009) with the women rating themselves higher. These results support the alignment of self-concepts with traditional sex role stereotypes of men and women in general. Out of the 26 personality traits, the only trait where men rated themselves higher than women in the entire study was on a traditional view of themselves as "interested in women", the machismo image, something which is to be expected if men are attempting to fulfill their stereotypical roles. Likewise, women wouldn't rate as highly on this item since it is not "feminine" or quite as acceptable to admit that she is very interested in men, at least to bluntly say so.

Also, the women scored significantly higher on their collective self-concept with regard to Dependability, a trait traditionally exhibited by women. These two significant differences, Interest in Opposite Sex with men rating themselves higher, and Dependability with women rating themselves higher continue to support the research (Broverman, et.al., 1968, 1972) that men and women, even educated and professionally-oriented men and women, still incorporate into their individual self-concepts traditional male and female stereotype traits.

CONCLUSIONS

The purposes of this study were to 1) identify distinct personality traits of travelers in admissions jobs and non-travelers in residence hall positions, and 2) analyze differences, if any, in personality traits of male and female travelers, in an attempt to re-examine the influence that sex-role and occupational stereotyping play in the self-perception of men and women who choose a job traditionally dominated by men.

Two distinct personality trait differences were observable with regard to travelers

and non-travelers. Travelers tended to rate themselves significantly higher than non-travelers with regard to Social Poise, and non-travelers tended to rate themselves higher than travelers with regard to Popularity. The hope that distinct personality traits could be identifiable in both travelers and non-travelers for purposes of employee self-selectivity and employers' hiring practices was not realized for two reasons: the lack of a greater number of significant personality trait differences between the two groups and secondly, the fact that the two statistically significant personality traits, Social Poise, and Popularity are too subjective to be used as hiring indicators.

The second, and perhaps more important, part of this paper compared the self-concepts of men and women who traveled in their admissions jobs in order to determine if the women would still perceive themselves along stereotypical lines although they had chosen a job (admissions) that has been sex-typed or dominated by men.

The data demonstrated that on 24 of the personality traits, both the men and women travelers rated themselves equally, and that for the traits of autonomy and individuality, the women rated themselves significantly higher than the men. These results are indeed surprising, since when all men and all women in the total sample still significantly rated themselves along sex stereotypes with the men rating themselves significantly higher in "Interest in the Opposite Sex" and the women rating themselves significantly higher in "Dependability".

These unexpected yet surprising results of the women admissions travelers indirectly support the research by Tangri (1972). Tangri has studied women who choose jobs in which they as women represent only 30-50% of the employees in a particular occupation and are defined as "Moderate Role Innovators", whose personality profiles include the characteristics of autonomy and individuality. It might be concluded from this study that SUNY women admissions personnel are another example of Moderate Role Innovators, having chosen jobs where the majority employed are men, with the women's self-concepts reflecting non-stereotypical role expectations.

Tangri's explanation for role innovators' personalities is family background,

levels of parents' education, relationship with both parents, and very importantly, the existence and type of career of the mother. Although this present paper did not attempt to analyze why the admissions women perceived themselves the way they did, it may be encouraging to see autonomous and individualistic women serving as role models for the students they are recruiting. If a graduating high school female senior saw more women traveling and recruiting in admissions work, they themselves might consider careers traditionally closed to them as a result of occupational sex typing. This expansion of career opportunities for 53% of the population can only aid in the blurring and eventual decreasing of psychological barriers of women and career options.

This study also indirectly supports recent research conducted by Frieze (1974) where men's and women's perceptions of the sexes are shifting so that both sexes are seen as exhibiting more positive traits. Dependability, autonomy and individuality are all desirable traits, regardless of whether a man or woman exhibits them. It is especially important to emphasize again that women, in this present study, do perceive themselves as positively as men do with regard to at least twenty-four personality traits. Slowly, but surely, are we moving toward the healthy concept of androgyny where both men and women can feel free to exhibit desirable traits that would make us all stronger and more sensitive human beings, regardless of our sex?

It is hoped that traditional ways of viewing men and women will no longer be a major determinant in selecting candidates for either sex-typed or neutral jobs. With individual differences and unique personalities abounding in the 1970's, it would indeed be tragic if women were still perceived by others and by themselves as not "having the stuff" it takes to participate in male-dominated jobs, or, for that matter, for men not to "have the stuff" it takes to participate in traditional female careers. Admissions work is a varied and exciting career whose future demands the full participation and expertise of both sexes who can bring to the job the sensitivity, autonomy, sincerity and other desirable characteristics that can make us all better counselors and role models and hence, realize our full potential as total human beings.

TABLE 1

SELF-RATING QUESTIONNAIRE

Listed below are 26 descriptive terms. Answer each item according to "How I see my actual self" on a scale from 5 to 1, "5" being very high on a particular trait and "1" being very low. Though some of the terms may seem somewhat vague to you, do the best you can. Please do not go on to the next page until this page is completed.

DATE _____

SEX M F

		Stand Very High				Stand Very Low
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Intelligence	—	—	—	—	—
2.	Emotional Maturity	—	—	—	—	—
3.	Social Poise	—	—	—	—	—
4.	Physical Attractiveness	—	—	—	—	—
5.	Dominance	—	—	—	—	—
6.	Sportsmanship	—	—	—	—	—
7.	Prestige	—	—	—	—	—
8.	Sociability	—	—	—	—	—
9.	Sincerity	—	—	—	—	—
10.	Initiative	—	—	—	—	—
11.	Trustfulness	—	—	—	—	—
12.	Flexibility	—	—	—	—	—
13.	Individuality	—	—	—	—	—
14.	Self-Understanding	—	—	—	—	—
15.	Interest in Opposite Sex	—	—	—	—	—
16.	Dependability	—	—	—	—	—
17.	Motivation	—	—	—	—	—
18.	Understanding of Others	—	—	—	—	—
19.	Self-Acceptance	—	—	—	—	—
20.	Popularity	—	—	—	—	—
21.	Creativeness	—	—	—	—	—
22.	Overall Adjustment	—	—	—	—	—
23.	Self-Confidence	—	—	—	—	—
24.	Autonomy	—	—	—	—	—
25.	Security-Minded	—	—	—	—	—
26.	General Success	—	—	—	—	—

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